

Policy 2.5.1 Community Design — Goals, Policies and Action Statements

City's Image

Goal 2.5A Promote Sunnyvale's image by maintaining, enhancing and creating physical features which distinguish Sunnyvale from surrounding communities and by preserving historic buildings, special districts and residential neighborhoods which make the City unique.

Policy 2.5A.1 Identify the boundaries of the City with attractive and distinctive features.

Action Statements

- 2.5A.1a. Encourage unique and uniform roadway landscaping and, where possible, median improvements to distinguish the City's boundaries.
- 2.5A.1b. Continue to enhance the visibility, accessibility and use of the San Francisco Bay on the City's northern boundary.
- 2.5A.1c. Consider studying ways to minimize the barrier impact of highways and expressways by developing design approaches which relate these roadways to the rest of the community.
- 2.5A.1d. Continue to develop a comprehensive gateway improvement program to select major gateways for improvements such as special landscaping, signage, visitor information centers, patterned pavement, monuments or artwork and unique private development standards.
- 2.5A.1e. Consider installing new City of Sunnyvale monument signs at major gateways into Sunnyvale and developing a comprehensive sign program to identify major attractions within the City.
- 2.5A.1f. Locate City of Sunnyvale signs in attractive surroundings and, whenever possible, in medians with distinctive landscaping.
- 2.5A.1g. Encourage distinctive and attractive buildings and site design at major gateways into Sunnyvale.
- 2.5A.1h. Maintain a compatible scale with the roadway when designing gateway improvements.

Policy 2.5A.2 Ensure that new development is compatible with the character of special districts and residential neighborhoods.

Action Statements

- 2.5A.2a. Maintain design guidelines and policies for new construction in historic districts which define acceptable building styles, shapes, rooflines,

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colors, materials, fenestration and setbacks and develop new guidelines as needed.

2.5A.2b. Continue to maintain and develop zoning standards which preserve the quality of residential neighborhoods.

2.5A.2c. Continue to encourage infill development or redevelopment which is compatible with the use, density, setbacks, height and, where possible, the predominant building style and size of the surrounding district or neighborhood.

2.5A.2d. Continue to identify and adopt methods of preserving historic resources and special districts.

Policy 2.5A.3 Support measures which enhance the identity of special districts and residential neighborhoods to create more variety in the physical environment.

Action Statements

2.5A.3a. Encourage diversity and develop programs to emphasize the unique features of special districts and neighborhoods.

2.5A.3b. Consider development of specific plans or design guidelines for the El Camino Real Commercial District and Mathilda Avenue corridor and study the feasibility of specific plans or guidelines for portions of Evelyn Avenue.

2.5A.3c. Continue to preserve buildings with unique historic or architectural value.

2.5A.3d. Protect historic landmarks by discouraging adjacent development which hides or overwhelms their unique qualities.

2.5A.3e. Encourage new landmarks and features to distinguish districts and neighborhoods.

2.5A.3f. Strengthen the downtown as the visual as well as functional focus of Sunnyvale.

2.5A.3g. Consider design features that help locate the downtown district and emphasize the roadways and intersections leading downtown.

2.5A.3h. Encourage distinctive projects at major nodes which have a coherent spatial relationship and create dynamic spaces at these intersections.

2.5A.3i. Maintain existing programs and study new programs which promote the maintenance and quality of residential neighborhoods.

The View From The Road

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Goal 2.5B Create an attractive street environment which will compliment private and public properties and be comfortable for residents and visitors.

Policy 2.5B.1 Maintain and provide attractive landscaping in the public right-of-way to identify the different types of roadways and districts, make motorists more comfortable and improve the enjoyment of residential neighborhoods.

Action Statements

- 2.5B.1a. Continue to maintain and provide landscaped medians on major thoroughfares where it is physically and financially feasible.
- 2.5B.1b. Maintain and provide professionally designed medians with an interesting and attractive variety of ornamental, deciduous and evergreen trees and plants which are predominantly water-wise and drought resistant.
- 2.5B.1c. Continue to design landscape medians for easy and safe maintenance.
- 2.5B.1d. Encourage tree selection in the right-of-way which is in scale with the type of roadway and emphasizes important gateways.
- 2.5B.1e. Consider uniform and cohesive landscape themes for districts, major thoroughfares, City boundaries and neighborhoods.
- 2.5B.1f. Continue to choose roadway trees based on the planting site micro climate, whether the tree species is disease and insect resistant, location of utility wires, size of the planting site, root system potential for sidewalk damage, pruning requirements and the appropriateness of the visual characteristics of the trees.
- 2.5B.1g. Encourage trees which do not obscure business signage in commercial districts.
- 2.5B.1h. Continue to provide attractive canopy trees in residential districts.
- 2.5B.1i. Investigate new varieties of trees for use in the City right-of-way.
- 2.5B.1j. Continue to plant and maintain street trees along the public right-of-way and identify areas which require replanting or replacement trees.

Policy 2.5B.2 Provide a safe and comfortable system of pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

Action Statements

- 2.5B.2a. Continue to maintain City sidewalks and study ways to prevent root damage.
- 2.5B.2b. Consider studying alternatives or modifications to monolithic sidewalks to provide traffic buffers for pedestrians.

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- 2.5B.2c. Consider installing street trees next to the curb along major thoroughfares with significant pedestrian activity or in special areas which would benefit from a unified landscape theme.
- 2.5B.2d. Cooperate in regional efforts to establish a bay trail around San Francisco Bay.
- 2.5B.2e. Consider installing benches on sidewalks where there are shady resting spots or scenic vistas.

Policy 2.5B.3 Minimize elements which clutter the roadway and look unattractive.

Action Statements

- 2.5B.3a. Maintain the requirements for undergrounding overhead utility wires.
- 2.5B.3b. Maintain and develop programs to achieve more attractive private fencing facing the public right-of-way.
- 2.5B.3c. Continue to work with County and State agencies to choose appropriate colors, textures and landscaping for sound walls on freeways and expressways.
- 2.5B.3d. Encourage soundwall location and design which emphasizes important gateways into Sunnyvale.
- 2.5B.3e. Maintain a sign ordinance to assure that signage is attractive, compatible with the district and not distracting to motorists.
- 2.5B.3f. Continue to ensure that signage is used to identify businesses rather than advertise them.

Private Development

Goal 2.5C Ensure that buildings and related site improvements for private development are well designed and compatible with surrounding properties and districts.

Policy 2.5C.1 Place a priority on quality architecture and site design which will enhance the image of Sunnyvale and create a vital and attractive environment for businesses, residents and visitors, and be reasonably balanced with the need for economic development to assure Sunnyvale's economic prosperity.

Action Statements

- 2.5C.1a. Continue to improve the design review process by using design professionals on staff and developing design guidelines to direct developers and assist the City in architectural and site review.

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- 2.5C.1b. Consider developing handout and summaries of design policies, guidelines and regulations to assist developers early in the project design process.
- 2.5C.1c. Continue to insure that projects have amenities which make them attractive and that these features are not sacrificed to maximize development potential.

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Policy 2.5C.2 Review site plans to insure the design is compatible with the natural and surrounding built environment.

Action Statements

- 2.5C.2a. Encourage site design which preserves scenic vistas and maximizes solar orientation for heating and cooling.
- 2.5C.2b. Continue to monitor and develop standards for the preservation of mature trees and landscaping and encourage the preservation of landscaping to be considered early in the site design.
- 2.5C.2c. Continue to require that sites be designed so that the building locations, driveways, parking, exterior mechanical equipment, auxiliary structures and service access areas are attractive and compatible with adjoining properties and the public right-of-way.
- 2.5C.2d. Continue to require that on-site lighting be energy efficient, unobtrusive and located to minimize off-site glare while providing adequate night time safety.
- 2.5C.2e. Encourage site plans to be integrated with the adjoining road pattern, and at important junctures, provide view corridors into the project or other interesting features which will engage people.
- 2.5C.2f. Continue to review project design to insure minimum noise impacts to adjoining properties and reduce noise impacts from off-site sources, such as traffic.
- 2.5C.2g. Consider studying areas where the street and building setback relationship could be improved.
- 2.5C.2h. Encourage new construction to be compatible with the open space characteristics between buildings in districts or neighborhoods.
- 2.5C.2i. Continue to require landscaped buffers on commercial or residential properties which provide adequate protection for adjoining residential properties.
- 2.5C.2j. Consider prohibiting wing walls or other blank, high walls on buildings in order to create attractive transition zones between buildings.
- 2.5C.2k. Continue to require the screening of exterior mechanical equipment.

Policy 2.5C.3: Ensure that site design creates places which are well organized, attractive, efficient and safe.

Action Statements

- 2.5C.3a. Encourage sites to have obvious and easy to locate entries.

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- 2.5C.3b. Encourage site plans to have a legible organization including focal points and features which provide direction and clarity about the use of the site.
 - 2.5C.3c. Encourage multiple family residential projects to have differentiated outdoors spaces, including private entries which provide individual identity, semi-private transitional spaces and common areas with unrestricted and easy access.
 - 2.5C.3d. Encourage integrated site plans which have clear boundaries, similar detailing for all the elements and a complementary relationship with the building.
 - 2.5C.3e. Encourage design elements which are pleasant to the senses.
 - 2.5C.3f. Continue to require adequate, attractive, water-wise, drought tolerant and efficiently irrigated landscaping and routinely review landscape standards.
 - 2.5C.3g. Consider investigating innovative approaches to parking lot landscaping which provide shade and vertical relief to large asphalt areas.
 - 2.5C.3h. Continue to require full perimeter landscaping around parking lots whenever possible.
 - 2.5C.3i. Encourage outdoor areas for relaxation or eating which are protected from noise and traffic.
 - 2.5C.3j. Encourage sites to be designed with a sense of mystery so that the design is interesting and engaging.
 - 2.5C.3k. Continue to require visible and attractive artworks for new private development at gateways and on large commercial and industrial properties.
 - 2.5C.3l. Encourage reciprocal ingress-egress easements between commercial properties whenever feasible to minimize curb cuts, increase landscaping and improve vehicular safety.
 - 2.5C.3m. Continue to require site plans with good public visibility of entries, adequate night time lighting, safe on-site circulation systems and quick, unobstructed access routes for fire and police services.
 - 2.5C.3n. Continue to require sites plans to be easily navigated by people with handicaps and for some projects consider innovative features in excess of minimum state standards for handicap access.
- Policy 2C.4 Encourage quality architectural design which improves the City's identity, inspires creativity and heightens individual as well cultural identity.

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- 2.5C.4a. Encourage easily identified and attractive building entrances which are oriented to the street.
- 2.5C.4b. Consider eliminating floor area ratio restrictions on entrances which enhance the architecture of the building and cannot be converted to work space.
- 2.5C.4c. Require roof elements to wrap around the building so that the element looks integrated and not just pasted on.
- 2.5C.4d. Encourage clear glass windows at the pedestrian level for commercial buildings to provide visibility of the activities inside stores and restaurants and visibility of pedestrian activity outside.
- 2.5C.4e. Continue to require mechanical equipment to be fully screened and integrated with the architecture of the building.
- 2.5C.4f. Encourage building windows to have a shape and spacing consistent with the building style.
- 2.5C.4g. Encourage below grade parking to be unobtrusive and integrated with the building architecture by continuing the same materials and colors as the building, screening auto entrances from public view and using landscaping and berming to reestablish a natural relationship with the ground.
- 2.5C.4h. Consider developing zoning ordinance standards for minimum depths of below grade parking and avoid at grade parking under buildings.
- 2.5C.4i. Encourage buildings with two or more stories to have architectural elements which create a pedestrian scale on the ground level, such as variations in the textures and materials, differentiated piers and columns, recessed entries and windows, awnings or offset planes.
- 2.5C.4j. Avoid tall buildings which create a tunnel effect and where necessary step the building back above the second level or stagger setbacks on the street.
- 2.5C.4k. Encourage buildings to have interesting articulation on all sides through changes in the building plane and height and the addition of elements such as deeply recessed or bay windows, porticos or dormers which create shadow and texture.
- 2.5C.4l. Avoid blank walls on the ends of buildings facing the roadway and provide detail and articulation on these elevations.
- 2.5C.4m. Encourage the spacing and size of doors and windows to have a rhythm compatible with the architectural style.
- 2.5C.4n. Encourage buildings where each of the building elements, such as windows, roofs and walls, are in proportion with each other.

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- 2.5C.4o. Encourage high quality, durable materials for buildings which create texture.
 - 2.5C.4p. Avoid piecemeal embellishment, frequent changes in materials or materials that are incompatible with the building style.
 - 2.5C.4q. Encourage exterior building materials to wrap around corners and any change in materials only to be made in locations where there is a change in the building plane or where a change in materials is effectively used to identify the base of the building.
 - 2.5C.4r. Review building colors in the context of the scale of the building and avoid strong colors which may be overwhelming at larger scale.
 - 2.5C.4s. Encourage buildings where all of the design elements, such as colors, materials, style and ornamentation are unified and create cohesive, attractive and distinctive architecture.
- Policy 2C.5 Ensure that buildings are appropriate to their context and designed to be compatible with surrounding properties and special districts.

Action Statements

- 2.5C.5a. Encourage new construction to be consistent with the horizontal or vertical building orientation or building shape of special districts or streetscapes.
- 2.5C.5b. Encourage roof styles which are similar to surrounding buildings or unique districts.
- 2.5C.5c. Avoid buildings which do not have a similar scale or height as surrounding properties, except at gateways or for landmark structures.
- 2.5C.5d. Consider studying floor area ratio limitations for residential and commercial districts.
- 2.5C.5e. Avoid building colors which are not compatible with adjoining properties or special districts.
- 2.5C.5f. Encourage new construction to be designed so that it minimizes the impact on the privacy of adjoining residential properties.
- 2.5C.5g. Avoid tall buildings which substantially shade adjoining residential properties.
- 2.5C.5h. Continue to require additional setbacks for new construction when necessary to preserve the light, air, views and privacy of adjoining residential properties.

Public Facilities

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Goal 2.5D Provide public facilities which are accessible, attractive and add to the enjoyment of the physical environment.

Policy 2.5D.1 Ensure that Sunnyvale's public facilities are easily identified, accessible, attractive and representative of the community's values and aspirations.

Action Statements

- 2.5D.1a. Consider implementing a comprehensive sign program for public facilities and City of Sunnyvale entry signs which may include maps to show the location of City facilities.
- 2.5D.1b. Establish a consistent design vocabulary for all public signage including fixture type, lettering, colors, symbols and logos.
- 2.5D.1c. Consider providing for the use of well designed banners for City events, holidays and other special occasions.
- 2.5D.1d. Consider implementing ways to increase the visibility of the Civic Center on Mathilda Avenue and El Camino Real and consider better identification for the Community Center along Remington Avenue.

Policy 2.5D.2 Maintain beautiful and comfortable outdoor public places which provide a shared sense of ownership and belonging for Sunnyvale residents, business owners and visitors.

Action Statements

- 2.5D.2a. Continue to provide public parks where people can enjoy nature, exercise, socialize and relax.
- 2.5D.2b. Continue to provide courtyards and public plazas around City buildings and encourage at least one large plaza downtown.
- 2.5D.2c. Encourage public courtyards and plazas to have: comfortable, shady places to sit; protection from automobile noise and fumes; defined boundaries; and, where appropriate, water elements and artworks.
- 2.5D.2d. Choose water elements, such as fountains or water sculptures, which will look attractive when water is not available because of drought conditions.
- 2.5D.2e. Continue to acquire public artworks which contribute to the public identity of outdoor places and provide pleasure and enrichment for Sunnyvale residents.
- 2.5D.2g. Encourage selection of public artworks which have a broad appeal and capture the aspirations or social and cultural heritage of the community.
- 2.5D.2h. Insure that some public artworks are meant for children and for touching and playing.

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- 2.5D.2i. Insure that the scale and subject of public art is appropriate to its location.
 - 2.5D.2j. Encourage some commercial activities in public plazas downtown.
 - 2.5D.2k. Continue to encourage pedestrian and commercial activity on the sidewalks of the historic 100 block of Murphy Avenue.
 - 2.5D.2l. Encourage new redevelopment downtown to be oriented to increase the visibility and use of the small courtyard on Washington Avenue by the parking structure.
 - 2.5D.2m. Support the parking assessment district downtown.
 - 2.5D.2n. Encourage below grade parking downtown and avoid parking structures which hide important buildings and districts or block the view into the downtown from major roadways.
- Policy 2.5D.3 Work with outside government agencies to achieve attractive public and quasi-public facilities consistent with the quality of development in Sunnyvale.

Action Statements

- 2.5D.3a. Encourage adequate, attractive and legible signage for public and quasi-public facilities not owned by Sunnyvale.
- 2.5D.3b. Cooperate with the Santa Clara Water District to develop programs to improve the appearance of flood control channels and drainage swales.
- 2.5D.3c. Cooperate with the City and County of San Francisco on improvements to the Hetch Hetchy right-of-way to make better use of this large open space area.
- 2.5D.3d. Encourage PG&E and Southern Pacific Railroad to improve the appearance of transmission line easements and the railroad lines.

(Adopted in December 1990)

Lead Department: Community Development